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Executive Registry

9 SEP 1966

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Vietnamese Language Training

1. This memorandum is for information. It responds to your request (accompanying the attached note from Sherman Kent) to "find out how many U. S. Government employees have been and are being taught Vietnamese."

2. The data needed for a complete response to your request are not available. But we have obtained reports on the numbers of individuals who have received instruction in Vietnamese through the Foreign Service Institute, the Defense Language Institute, and the CIA Language School, which, as far as we can determine, have the only Government facilities engaged in such training. Attachment B summarizes these reports. Missing is information on the relatively few Government employees who have attended Berlitz or other non-Government language schools and those who have acquired a knowledge of Vietnamese while serving in South Vietnam.

3. As Attachment B reflects, very little Vietnamese language training took place within the Government prior to 1 July 1962 when the military services began a concerted effort in this respect. The build-up has continued since that date, and plans for FY 1967 reflect still further increases, with the Defense Language Institute, for example, projecting an enrollment of 3631. However, the preponderance of this instruction has been and still is pitched at the lower proficiency levels, serving primarily for orientation purposes.

4. To reach the "Elementary" proficiency level in spoken Vietnamese (which linguists consider a language of "medium" difficulty--comparable to, say, Russian or Persian), most students need about three months of full-time instruction. About six months are needed for the "Intermediate" level. Thus far, only about 1000 individuals have completed enough instruction to reach the "Intermediate" level and another 215 are currently enrolled in courses designed for this purpose.

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STATINTL

5. The relatively small numbers of Government personnel trained in Vietnamese cannot be attributed to a shortage of facilities, apparently, since the growth of facilities--certainly at the [REDACTED] CIA Language School--have consistently kept pace with or out-stripped enrollments. CIA's School, for instance, with its Vietnamese linguist, two native speakers, and two additional native speakers in process, could increase enrollments substantially. And [REDACTED] which has been "importing" native speakers directly from South Vietnam, expects by the end of this month to be able to handle up to 35 sections of 4 to 5 students each in full-time training.

STATINTL

6. You may be aware that Ambassador Leonard A. Unger has expressed concern over the small number of Government employees who can speak Vietnamese. Last May he wrote the Chief, FE Division, suggesting the formation of an inter-agency task force, which Unger would head, to stimulate additional training in this area. Two CIA officers, one from FE and one from OTR, were named to the task force but as yet it has not been activated.

STATINTL

[REDACTED]
R. L. Sherman
Deputy Director
for Support

2 Atts:

- Att A: Memo dtd 7 Jul 66 to DCI fr Sherman
Kent, subj: "Vietnamese Linguists"
- Att B: "Vietnamese Language Training in
U. S. Government Facilities"

11/566-3519

7 July 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Vietnamese Linguists

1. What follows is not primarily Agency business. It is national business. And probably the one officer of government to do something about it is the President of the United States.
2. How many trustworthy, competent, and well-educated American citizens of the appropriate age group to serve in Vietnam possess a fluency in the spoken and written Vietnamese language? Without having made anything remotely akin to a systematic census, my guess is that there are appallingly few.
3. My concern in this matter has been triggered entirely by intelligence considerations. To wit: the US does not begin to have enough Vietnamese linguists in the field to exploit captured documents or interrogate POWs, deserters, chieu hoi folks, etc. The greater part of the information available to the analytical arms of US intelligence from these two sources is that which has been produced in the first instance by Vietnamese nationals. The reasons why this is a highly unsatisfactory way to proceed are numerous and obvious.

4. Whatever the claims of intelligence for Vietnamese linguists, they must be far surpassed by the claims of the American military authorities, the political and economic officers of Embassy Saigon, the AID people, USIA, etc. It is sobering indeed to realize how many of our war-time troubles may be simply a function of blurred communication.

5. Suppose the present active military phase of the war changes in the right direction, suppose even that it comes to an end within the next year and a half, or two years. The US presence required in Vietnam will probably have to be very substantial for a far longer period -- who knows, five, ten, or fifteen years or more.

6. Somebody ought to do something now and as I suggest above, that somebody will probably have to be the President. The something should proceed somewhat as follows. First, a very quick canvass of the number of American citizens willing and able to serve in Vietnam who right now possess a proficiency in the language. Two, some rough and ready estimates from the field as to how many linguists are required for a more efficient operation of the multi-faceted US program in Vietnam. Three, the laying on of as many language training programs as are required. Surely the US effort should be

commensurate to that which was made with respect to the
training of Japanese linguists in World War II.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SK' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

SHERMAN KENT

VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE TRAINING INU. S. GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

The following statistics are based on information obtained from the Foreign Service Institute, the Defense Language Institute, and the CIA Language School, and represent--so far as can be determined--the total effort of these facilities in recent years in providing Vietnamese language training. All figures reflect full-time training and were current as of 30 June 1966. With minor exceptions as noted, all training has taken place since 1 July 1962.

FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE

<u>Type Course</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Graduated</u>		<u>Currently Enrolled</u>	
		<u>State</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Other</u>
Regular (civilian only)	8-12 weeks	0	40-50	0	0
Regular (civilian only)	20-48 weeks	34*	42	2	21

*five trained prior to 1961

Number Trained Including
Those Enrolled 30 June '66

Special (military only)	20 weeks	100
Special (military only)	48 weeks	220

DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTEThe Presidio at Monterey, California

<u>Type Course</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Number Graduated</u>	<u>Currently Enrolled</u>
Special	5 weeks	39	0
Special	8 weeks	315	34
Special	12 weeks	1,387	232
Oral Comprehension	37 weeks	117	113
Basic	47 weeks	605	68

NOTE: Above totals include an estimated 10 civilians; remainder are all military personnel.

29 Sept 1966

*3 Months September -
2 in process - Nov 1/Jan*

Our current program in Vietnamese language consists of two types of courses:

- 15 Nov
Cult to 20 Nov = 120 Nov
30 in Jan = 180*
- a. Eight-week courses to provide minimal orientation to use of Vietnamese.
- 10 Nov 20, b. 26-week courses designed to provide Intermediate
18 Jan 26 per my level proficiency.*

As currently planned our program can produce approximately 60 people in the ^{eight}~~six~~-week course and 20 people trained to the Intermediate level before the end of Fiscal Year 1967.

Thus a doubling of our effort would produce approximately 120 minimally trained officers and approximately 40 officers trained to the Intermediate level. Multiplying the currently expected output by factors of 4 and 10 would produce correspondingly greater numbers.

Alternatively, other cycling methods would produce different results. One native instructor can teach 1 1/5 full-time courses. Given five instructors we can teach 6

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

SECRET

classes simultaneously. Assuming six students per class (10 in orientation classes) the results for various cyclings can be easily computed. If, for example, we concentrated solely on the 26-week course we could produce approximately ~~sixty~~ *seventy-two* officers trained to the Intermediate level in 1 year.

-2-

SECRET

GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification
